

Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, November 13, 1810, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO WILLIAM DUANE J. MSS.

Monticello, November 13, 1810.

Dear Sir, —Your third packet is received before the second had been returned. It is now enclosed, and the other shall go by the next post. I find, as before, nothing to correct but those errors of the copyist which you would have corrected yourself before committed to the press. If it were practicable to send me the original sheets with the translated, perhaps my equal familiarity with both languages might enable me sometimes to be of some advantage; but I presume that might be difficult, and of little use, scarcely perhaps of any. I thank you for the copy of Williams. I have barely dipped into it a little. Enough, however, to see he is far short of the luminous work you are printing. Indeed I think that the most valuable work of the present age. I received from Williams, some years ago, his book on the claims of authors. I found him to be a man of sound and true principles, but not knowing how to go at them, and not able to trace or develop them for others. I believe with you that the crisis of England is come. What will be its issue it is vain to prophesy; so many thousand contingencies may turn up to affect its direction. Were I to hazard a guess, it would be that they will become a military despotism. Their recollections of the portion of liberty they have enjoyed will render force necessary to retain them under pure monarchy. Their pressure upon us has been so severe and so unprincipled, that we cannot deprecate their fate, though we might wish to see their naval power kept up to the level of that of the other principal powers separately taken. But may it not take a very different turn? Her

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paper credit annihilated, the precious metals must become her circulating medium. The taxes which can be levied on her people in these will be trifling in comparison with what they could pay in paper money; her navy then will be unpaid, unclothed, unfed. Will such a body of men suffer themselves to be dismissed and to starve? Will they not mutiny, revolt, embody

themselves under a popular Admiral, take possession of Western and Bermuda islands, and act on the Algerine system? If they should not be able to act on this broad scale, they will become individual pirates; and the modern Carthage will end as the old one has done. I am sorry for her people, who are individually as respectable as those of other nations—it is her government which is so corrupt, and which has destroyed the nation—it was certainly the most corrupt and unprincipled government on earth. I should be glad to see their farmers and mechanics come here, but I hope their nobles, priests, and merchants will be kept at home to be moralized by the discipline of the new government. The young stripling whom you describe is, probably, as George Nicholas used to say, “in the plenitude of puppyism.” Such coxcombs do not serve even as straws to show which way the wind blows. Alexander is unquestionably a man of an excellent heart, and of very respectable strength of mind; and he is the only sovereign who cordially loves us. Bonaparte hates our government because it is a living libel on his. The English hate us because they think our prosperity filched from theirs. Of Alexander's sense of the merits of our form of government, of its wholesome operation on the condition of the people, and of the interest he takes in the success of our experiment, we possess the most unquestionable proofs; and to him we shall be indebted if the rights of neutrals, to be settled whenever peace is made, shall be extended beyond the present belligerents; that is to say, European neutrals, as George and Napoleon, of mutual consent and common hatred against us, would concur in excluding us. I thought it a salutary measure to engage the powerful patronage of Alexander at conferences for peace, at a time when Bonaparte was courting him; and although circumstances have lessened its weight, yet it is prudent for us to cherish his good dispositions, as those alone which will be exerted in our favor when that

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occasion shall occur. He, like ourselves, sees and feels the atrociousness of both the belligerents. I salute you with great esteem and respect.